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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 000637

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: TOWARD A MEANINGFUL NATO-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

REF: A. USNATO 75
[1](#)B. 07 USNATO 79
[1](#)C. STATE 23178

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Les Viguerie for Reasons 1.4
(B and D)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. The primary goal of a strengthened NATO-Pakistan relationship must be to support our vital efforts in Afghanistan, and Post concurs that ref A's recommendations can help soothe Indo-Pak sensitivities. However, we should not assume India's automatic opposition to greater NATO engagement in South Asia. To do so would risk losing an opportunity to make progress with India as it emerges as a regional and global power whose leadership is searching for security relationships that expand its ability to respond to threats. India has engaged NATO quietly on several occasions in recent years and expressed interest in increased contact with the Alliance. A closer NATO-India relationship could not only help manage possible fallout from NATO-Pakistan cooperation and contribute to success in Afghanistan; it would also be a long-term strategic prize. NATO may find India to be a more constructive -- and receptive -- interlocutor than ever before. END SUMMARY.

NATO-Pakistan: Needs to be Non-threatening and Transparent to India
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[1](#)2. (S) Ref A proposes forging a broader NATO-Pakistan partnership and welcomes New Delhi's views. Post's sense is that India would not object to a NATO-Pakistan partnership provided it is non-threatening and transparent. First, India would be unlikely to oppose such a partnership if its purpose is to improve cooperation in Afghanistan and it does not creep into enhancing capabilities that could threaten India. Engagement at the level proposed in ref A -- i.e., select "partnership tools" and political dialogue -- would be unlikely to generate significant controversy in India. Second, an effort to make a NATO-Pakistan mechanism reasonably transparent to New Delhi is essential. This transparency would have to be a long-term commitment to India, not just at the beginning of the partnership. To this end, the India-specific recommendations in ref A could indeed help soothe Indo-Pak sensitivities about a more formal NATO-Pakistan partnership necessary to support efforts in Afghanistan.

13. (SBU) Founding Director of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) Dipankar Banerjee stressed to A/PolCouns that we should not assume India would oppose closer cooperation between NATO and Pakistan. India has important interests in a stable Afghanistan, and therefore in NATO-ISAF's success there. Banerjee explained that India agrees that Pakistan's border region is a major source of regional problems, so it is not difficult to make the case in India that Pakistan must be part of the solution to the problems NATO is trying to address.

NATO-India: India, Increasingly Confident, Open to Dialogue
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14. (S) In the same "food for thought" spirit of ref A, a broader NATO-Pakistan engagement may also be an opportunity to broaden dialogue between India and NATO. Post's interactions with Foreign Ministry officials, the National Security Adviser's office, and opinion leaders suggest India is willing to consider increased dialogue with the Alliance. India's goal is to be a regional power and a global player, and it wants to build the relationships necessary to play these roles. India still prefers to work under a UN umbrella where possible, but it pursues a policy of joining virtually every security-related forum and is increasingly willing to work more directly with a variety of partners when it serves India's interests. A more confident India has recently joined anti-piracy efforts off the Somali coast, taken an active role in the G20, completed the Civil Nuclear Agreement

NEW DELHI 00000637 002 OF 003

with the United States, and expanded law enforcement and intelligence cooperation with the United States and others following the Mumbai terrorist attacks. Expanding dialogue with NATO, a multilateral organization, could be perceived as less threatening to India's independent foreign policy than cozying up strategically on a bilateral basis with individual countries, including the United States. If the next government continues this trend, more structured and regular interaction with NATO would be a reasonable next step.

15. (C) India has quietly engaged NATO on several occasions in recent years, expressing interest in increased contact with the Alliance. Special Envoy Shyam Saran noted on his visit to NATO Headquarters in April 2007 that India's relationship with NATO had evolved considerably over the past few years and that India was now much more open to the relationship. Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon referred to NATO Deputy Secretary General Rizzo's reciprocal visit to New Delhi in April 2007 as "the occasion to begin a dialogue between India and NATO." Rizzo concluded, "We should follow-up on India's manifest willingness to engage with NATO, albeit in a low-key and gradualist manner." Similarly positive atmospherics surrounded Ambassador Shankar Bajpai's visit to NATO Headquarters in December 2007 (ref B). External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee also reportedly held discussions with NATO Secretary-General Jaap De Hoop Schaeffer at the UN in 2007. More recently, Menon noted to Secretary Clinton that India has quietly begun coordinating more with NATO in Afghanistan (ref C).

16. (C) Whereas talk of NATO was taboo in India as little as five years ago, the concept of interaction with the Alliance is gaining acceptance beyond the inner circles of government. IPCS Director Banerjee recounted for A/PolCouns that India has supported an annual track-two dialogue on India and NATO for several years. Banerjee characterized the dialogue prior to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai as largely academic. However, the fifth annual dialogue held in January 2009 was different, with participants supporting more formal channels of communication and cooperation with the Alliance. Banerjee stressed that we should not assume that India would pass up an opportunity for a more formalized, meaningful dialogue of its own with NATO in parallel with Pakistan's. The challenge will be in finding the right mechanism, according to

Banerjee, who speculated that NATO's "Contact Countries" approach may find support.

India-Afghanistan: Coordinating Efforts

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17. (C) The most tangible and immediate benefit of increased NATO-India dialogue could be felt in Afghanistan. In addition to India's desire to coordinate with NATO in Kabul (ref C), numerous Indian officials have reiterated to Post in recent months India's commitment to Afghan reconstruction. Yet, despite being the sixth largest donor to Afghanistan, India has remained in many ways aloof from or cut out of international efforts there. While India sits on the UN-chaired Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), it lacks a formal mechanism to coordinate directly with NATO's International Stabilization Force (ISAF), despite its UN mandate. Furthermore, Indians have tended to view NATO's role in Afghanistan as overwhelmingly one of providing security. Few Delhi-based policy makers or think tank pundits seem familiar with NATO's "Comprehensive Approach," or with the fact that many NATO-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are civilian-led and that the delivery of development and governance assistance is at the core of the PRTs' mission. The result has been India's estrangement from efforts to integrate military and development efforts at the center of U.S. counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine and at best ad hoc interaction with PRTs in the field. Developing a mutually acceptable mechanism for NATO-ISAF to coordinate with India in Afghanistan could be a fruitful topic for discussion.

NATO-India: How It Can Happen

NEW DELHI 00000637 003 OF 003

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18. (C) Following India's elections in April-May, the new government -- depending on its composition -- could be encouraged to engage quietly with NATO, requesting ideas on how to further deepen the relationship. Contact beginning with staff-to-staff level talks could hopefully expand through the many outreach tools NATO has developed for non-Ally engagement. This expansion could be "low-key and gradualist," as DSYG Rizzo suggested. For example, India could be invited to attend a selection of the vast catalogue of activities, conferences, seminars and training courses that are open to non-Ally partners. In this regard, we might work with the GOI to identify priority areas of NATO-India cooperation. For example, India's willingness to partner with the U.S., Japan, and Australia in the wake of the 2004 tsunami suggests that civil emergency planning and disaster relief may be fruitful areas of cooperation. India might also engage in an exchange of views with Allies on relevant political issues, either in a formal meeting of a NATO committee -- such as the North Atlantic Council -- or in informal "coffee" hosted by one of the NATO PermReps. Appropriate Indian officials traveling in Europe might also be encouraged to consider adding Brussels to their itinerary.

19. (C) Efforts should also be focused on educating Indian policy and opinion makers about the "new NATO," demonstrating that NATO's goals and objectives are often in line with India's stated security interests and encouraging greater Indian interaction with the organization. We should encourage Indian officials, parliamentarians or other VIPs visiting Europe or transiting en route to the U.S. to stop by NATO and receive a briefing on NATO's operations and engagement opportunities. Indian journalists, including but not limited to Europe-based India media representatives, could also be encouraged to take advantage of NATO tours. NATO could also provide program material for an Indian-hosted NATO information offices; these offices are structured much like American Corners, in local libraries and academic institutions.

Comment: A Strategic Opportunity

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¶10. (C) The primary goal of a strengthened NATO-Pakistan relationship as noted in ref A is to support efforts in Afghanistan, but our goal for NATO-India would be more strategic, taking small steps now that will lead to more formal consultation mechanisms. The goal should not include attempts to turn India into a formal NATO partner; formal security tie-ups are too controversial in India and non-alignment, at least formally, is not a dead letter. But as India emerges as a power, it is searching for security relationships that expand its ability to respond to threats. If NATO is able to offer practical cooperation and flexible consultative arrangements, it may find India to be a more willing interlocutor than ever before.

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